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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the extent to which positive moral values are included in reading and social studies textbooks. Random samples of social studies textbooks (published by Harcourt Brace, D. C. Heath, Scott Foresman, Silver Burdett and Ginn, and McGraw-Hill) and reading textbooks (published by MacMillan/McGraw-Hill, Harcourt Brace, and Houghton Mifflin) on the adopted list for Texas (a list also used by other states) at the third- and fifth-grade levels were examined. A "moral values matrix" consisting of religious, individual, and social/secular values was used as a basis for the examination of the moral content of each sample. A single inclusion of a moral or value from the matrix meant that the textbook was judged as having fulfilled the matrix category. Results indicated that the social studies textbooks at both grade levels contained 75% or more of the values in the matrix. Results also indicated that while the reading textbooks at both levels contained only about 50% of the values in the matrix, the textbooks focused on family life and relationships. Findings suggest that the charge of a lack of positive values presented in social studies and reading textbooks appears to be unfounded. (Contains two figures illustrating aspects of the moral values matrix and a figure of data.) (RS)

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Morals/Values: A Review of Selected Third and Fifth Grade Reading and Social Studies Texts

by Pat Tipton Sharp, Ph.D. and Randy M. Wood, Ph.D., School of Education, Baylor University

Introduction

The place of traditional American values in student textbooks has been under fire in popular newspapers and magazines in recent years. Some critics such as Norma and Mel Gabler have declared that the current state adopted texts are devoid of positive values (Gabler, 1987). One other critic, Dr. Frank Nelsen states, "Public-school textbooks have become so void of content that they could well be described as filled with pablum" (Nelsen, 1987). These attacks have been made in a number of arenas. This study is designed to view a specific portion of the textbooks to see if the attacks are justified. This study has limited its scope to the evaluation of student textbooks in reading and social studies for grades three and five in order to determine the morals/values content in the books.

Numerous psychologists have indicated a need to understand the development of moral development with psychological and physical development (Piaget, 1965, 1981, 1982). Sutherland and Arbuthnot, in their Children and Books, apply Bandura's Social Learning Theory to children's literature (Bandura, 1971). These writers indicate that the characters and situations in children's books should provide role models for children. They also recommend that the stories be related to the child's own life so that the reader may identify with the motivations for behavior and the outcomes of the behavior.

The 1989 resolutions by the Committee of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development indicate that moral education should be a priority. In this call for reform, the first of twelve resolutions states:

> Students today are expected to address moral issues in their own lives and to fulfill the moral responsibilities of citizenship...ASCD urges that these democratic values (drawn from and supported by both religious and secular traditions) become a strong, unifying theme within schools (ASCD, 1989).

The Study

This study investigates the extent to which positive moral values are included in reading and social studies textbooks. This study concentrated on the stated adopted texts for grades three and five in reading and social studies.

The investigators realize that the mere inclusion of morals in a textbook does not assure that the concept is taught, but it does indicate that there is a greater possibility that the concept will be mentioned. The Texas State Adoption List was used since it is the list that is used extensively not only in Texas but also by school districts across the United States.

A second assumption which the researchers made is that a single inclusion of a moral/value in a reading may be judged as having fulfilled the requirements for that section of the study. The assumption of the researchers is that a single inclusion in the limited, random sample readings indicates that it is likely that more than one example could be found in the reading. For example, in the reading textbook entitled Observing, a boy forgives his friend who makes fun of his hobby of knitting. The inclusion of that concept fulfills the category "encourages moral virtues—forgiveness."

A central concern of this study is the definition of what is a moral value and what determines a positive moral value. The investigators in this study developed a matrix of

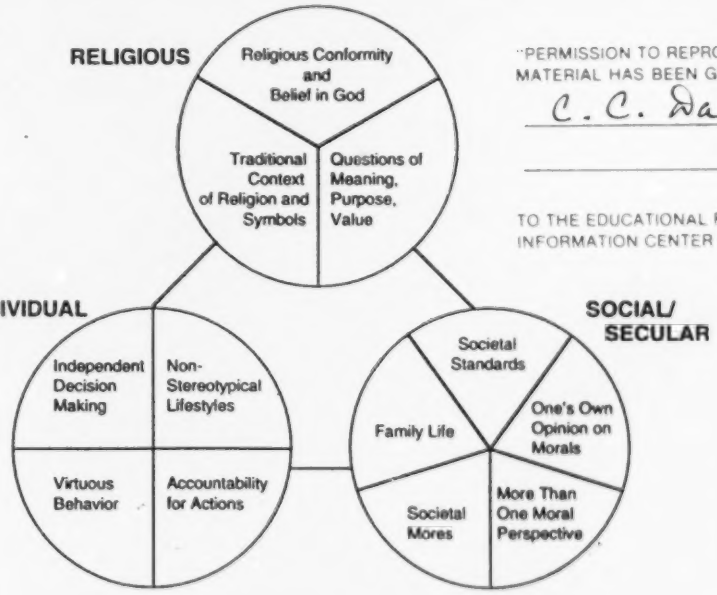

FIGURE 1: MORAL FACETS OF THE INDIVIDUAL

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Grade_____
Title of Book_____
Story_____

Religious	Individual	Social/Secular
I. Inspires religious conformity & belief in God	I. Involves independent decision making	I. Stimulates reflection on societal standards
II. includes traditional context of religion & religious symbols	II. Contains non-stereotypical lifestyles	II. Focuses positively on family life
III. Discusses questions of meaning, purpose, and value in life	III. Reflects virtuous behavior	III. Experiences societal mores vicariously
	IV. Stresses accountability for actions; encourages readers to take action	IV. Includes more than one perspective
		V. States explicitly author's opinion on a moral issue

FIGURE 2: MORAL VALUES MATRIX

values for use as the basis for their examination of student textbooks. The matrix is divided into three major sections which focus on religious, individual, and social/secular values. (See Figure 1) The subsections of the Religious Index of the matrix includes the values of religious conformity and belief in God; religious traditions and religious symbols; and questions of meaning, purpose and value in life. The Individual Index evaluates whether text materials offer students examples of independent decision making, non-stereotypical lifestyles, moral virtues, and accountability for actions. The Social/Secular Index identifies moral values in society such as societal standards, positive family life, societal mores, a variety of moral perspectives, and opinions on moral issues.

Findings

The random samples from the reading and social studies textbook series used in this study incorporate a large portion of the selected morals/values in the moral education matrix developed for this study. For the analysis of the samples from each textbook in the study a single inclusion of a moral/value from the matrix category in the four random sample readings meant that the textbook was judged as having fulfilled the matrix category. (See Figure 2)

In the analysis of samples from adopted textbooks, all four social studies textbooks adopted for use in the state of Texas for grades three and five (Harcourt Brace, D.C. Heath, Scott, Foresman, Silver Burdett & Ginn, and McGraw-Hill) were reviewed in this study. Random samples from three of the four third grade social studies books contain 75% of the values cited in the matrix, and the fourth book has examples of all of the values (Scott, Foresman). For the fifth grade, three of the five books (Harcourt Brace, D.C. Heath, and McGraw-Hill) incorporate 100% of the values identified, while Scott, Foresman has 83% of the values and

(continued on page 11)

READING ¶

(percentage of total values represented in reading textbooks) ¶

Third Grade		Fifth Grade
55% 99/180	**MACMILLAN/ MCGRAW-HILL** *Adventuring* *Landscapes* *Observing* *Each New Day* *Climb the Hills* *Turn A Corner*	48% 46/96
66% 72/108	**HARCOURT, BRACE** *City Spaces* *Three Cheers* *On Parade*	58% 28/48
47% 45/96	**HARCOURT, BRACE** *Sunbeams* *Landmarks* *Telescopes*	60% 99/180
54% 52/96	**HOUGHTON MIFFLIN** *Caravans* *Explorations* *Journeys*	63% 30/48

FIGURE 3: TEXAS ADOPTED READING TEXTBOOKS

Morals/Values continued from page 7

Silver Burdett & Ginn includes 75% of the values on the matrix.

The same emphasis on values exists in the reading textbooks which were a part of the study, though not to the extent seen in social studies materials. Among the third grade reading textbooks adopted by the state of Texas, three textbooks (MacMillan/McGraw-Hill, Scott, Foresman, and Houghton Mifflin) included more than 50% of the values shown in the entire matrix. Harcourt, Brace had 47% of the values cited. In fifth grade, again only MacMillan/McGraw-Hill had less than 50% of the value areas included Family life is a major focus in these textbooks. Relationships between members of a family are often the emphasis of the stories. (Figure three)

Conclusions

Charges of lack of positive values presented in social studies and reading textbooks would seem to be unfounded, at least in relation to the textbooks selected for this study. Using the matrix of morals/values to evaluate the inclusion of values in these writings, the researchers found examples to illustrate each moral/value category. Using only the small portion of each of the third and fifth grade social studies and reading textbooks in this study, a student would be exposed to one or more examples of every type of morals/values from the matrix. Not only do these textbooks have examples of the morals/values from the matrix, they also include the concepts in concrete models which are suitable to children's understandings.

References

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Piaget, Jean. *The Moral Judgment of the Child* (New York Free Press, 1965); Lawrence Kohlberg, Essays on Moral Development: The Philosophy of Moral Development (New York: Harper & Row, 1981); and Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

Bandura, Albert. *Psychological Modeling* (Chicago: Aldine & Atherton, 1971): 2. Bandura states, "Although much social learning is fostered through observation of real-life models, advances in communication have increased reliance upon symbolic models. In many instances people pattern their behavior after models presented in verbal or pictorial form."

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